

Message Text

SECRET

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41

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 035855

R 070833Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5898

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SANA

S E C R E T TEHRAN 2293

EXDIS

FOR SAUNDERS, INR

E.O.11652: NXGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, FT, IR

SUBJ: INR PAPER ON FTAI, AS SEEN FROM TEHRAN

REF: STATE 36080

1. INR PAPER ON SITUATION IN FTAI AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE OF
AREA (REFTEL) PROVIDE VALUABLE BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVE FOR US
ON THIS AREA OF INCREASING CONCERN TO IRANIANS. AS WE HAVE
REPORTED, SHAH AND GOI ARE DEEPLY DISTURBED BY WHAT THEY SEE AS
SOVIET PENCHANT FOR EXPLOITING "U.S. WEAKNESS AND INDECISION" TO
GAIN STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE IN AFRICA AND INDIAN OCEAN THROUGH
SUPPORT OF RADICAL REGIMES. SHAH SEES SOVIET INFLUENCE ALREADY
DOMINANT IN HORN AND RED SEA AREA AND FEARS THAT FTAI WOULD FALL
UNDER SOMALI, AND HENCE SOVIET, DOMINATION SOON AFTER INDEPENDENCE.
GOI THINKS THIS PROBABLY WOULD RESULT NOT ONLY IN ETHIOPIAN
MILITARY REACTION WHOSE CONSEQUENCES FOR PEACE AND STABILITY OF

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REGION CAN NOT BE FORESEEN BUT WOULD ALSO ELIMINATE FRENCH

ABILITY TO USE DJIBOUTI TO SUPPORT ITS NAVAL PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN, WHICH IRANIANS BELIEVE IS USEFUL IN BALANCING SUPERPOWER NAVIES UNTIL SUCH TIME AS LITTORAL STATES THEMSELVES CAN ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR INDIAN OCEAN SECURITY. SHAH HAS RECENTLY SUGGESTED IRAN MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PLAY ACTIVE NAVAL ROLE IN AREA AS SOON AS EXPECTED BECAUSE REDUCED OIL LIFTINGS HAVE FORCED STRETCH-OUT IN DEVELOPMENT OF DEEPWATER CAPABILITY. THIS, COMBINED WITH SHAH'S CONCERN THAT U.S. MAY BE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO FACE UP TO SOVIET CHALLENGE IN AFRICA, CREATES ANXIETY HERE THAT IF FRENCH LOSE BASE RIGHTS IN DJIBOUTI IT WILL CAUSE EVEN FASTER SLIDE OF WHOLE REGION INTO SOVIET ORBIT. POSSIBILITY THAT SOME CUBANS WHO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THEIR MISSION IN ANGOLA MIGHT BE SENT TO HELP SOMALIS ONLY ADDS TO SHAH'S NIGHTMARE.

2. MFA DIRGEN FOR ASIA AND AFRICA SADRIEH TOLD POLCOUNS THAT GOI HAS BEEN TALKING WITH FRENCH ABOUT FTAI SITUATION BOTH IN PARIS AND TEHRAN. IRANIANS WOULD PREFER FRENCH TO MAINTAIN CONTROL BUT RECOGNIZE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES TO GRANT INDEPENDENCE. MAIN CONSIDERATION FROM GOI POINT OF VIEW IS THAT FRANCE NOT LET GO UNTIL IT GETS ENFORCEABLE GUARANTEE THAT TERRITORY WILL NOT BE IMMEDIATELY SWALLOWED UP BY EITHER SIDE, ESPECIALLY SOMALIA, PROVOKING MILITARY RESPONSE BY OTHER. THIS GUARANTEE COULD TAKE FORM OF CONTINUED FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE OR SOME KIND OF INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARD, BUT MERE PROMISE BY SIAD WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH.

3. ALTHOUGH IRAN WOULD PREFER CONSERVATIVE POST-INDEPENDENCE GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD MAINTAIN TIES WITH FRANCE, IT WOULD PROBABLY SUPPORT CREATION OF MORE NEUTRAL GOVERNMENT ACCEPTABLE TO SOMALIA AND THIRD WORLD IF THAT GOVERNMENT SEEMED ABLE TO MAINTAIN TERRITORY'S INTEGRITY AND ALLOWED FRENCH TO USE DJIBOUTI. IF INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS WERE AGREED UPON AS CONDITION OF INDEPENDENCE, GOI MIGHT BE INDUCED TO CONTRIBUTE, AS IT DOES TO UNDOF, BOTH TO HELP INSURE STABILITY OF AREA IT CONSIDERS CRITICAL AND TO DEMONSTRATE ITS ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO PLAY RESPONSIBLE ROLE ON WORLD SCENE. GOI, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT WANT TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF ARAB COUNTRIES LIKE EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA AND JORDAN IN SUCH AN UNDERTAKING.

MIKLOS

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEGEMONY, INDEPENDENCE, SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TEHRAN02293
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760086-0949
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760386/aaaacyaj.tel
Line Count: 99
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 36080
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <20 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INR PAPER ON FTAI, AS SEEN FROM TEHRAN
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, FT, IR, US, UR, XW, XO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006